



Foster Manual

PURPOSE

Welcome to the Home At Last Humane Society Foster Program! Many dogs in our community are in need of finding permanent homes. Foster homes are an invaluable resource – they allow us to “expand our shelter walls” and help even more animals. Whether you are giving a dog a place to live until he can be adopted or providing temporary care for a puppy recovering from a cold, you are part of the solution to helping homeless pets in our community.

CONTACT INFORMATION

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TYPES OF ANIMALS FOSTERED

Puppies too young to spay/neuter

Foster period is variable, from 2-4 weeks depending on age.

Moms with nursing litters

Foster period is dependent on the age of the litter and ranges from 2-8 weeks.

Under-socialized dogs/puppies

Foster period is typically 2-3 weeks.

Puppies and dogs with kennel cough

Foster period is 2-3 weeks.

Dogs that need additional training or behavioral modification

Foster period is dependent on type of training needed and ranges from two weeks to a month or more, depending on progress.

Dogs that are overly stressed and need a break from the shelter or need to be adopted from foster care

Foster period is a minimum of one month and is variable after that, depending on shelter space and the individual animal's temperament.

Senior dogs that need to be adopted from foster care

Foster period is variable and may be a month or more.

Dogs with unknown histories (such as strays) that we would like to learn more about in a home setting

Foster period is 2-3 weeks.

Dogs for which there is no space at the shelter

Foster period is dependent on available space and ranges from two weeks to several months.

Dogs who need to recover from medical procedures/issues

Foster period is dependent on type of medical procedure and ranges from two weeks to a month or more, depending on progress.

Most foster placements require approximately 1-2 hours of daily care (including cleaning, feeding, and socializing). In addition to daily care, please remember that additional time commitments may be required to bring foster animals to Three Rivers for meetings with potential adopters, health checks, etc. and to respond to any health issues as they arise. All dogs will benefit from training. Much of the training can be built into daily tasks (such as sitting before receiving food); some training will be more structured and will take 10-30 minutes daily.

HOUSING/CONFINEMENT OF FOSTER ANIMALS

We require that foster animals be inside pets because of the chance of their escape and the skills you will teach them to be polite house guests. We will work with you to select the appropriate foster animal(s) for your particular situation.

PROVIDING VETERINARY CARE

Three Rivers will provide needed veterinary care and medications for all foster animals during their foster period. Any changes in a foster animal's health while in a foster home should be reported to the Foster Coordinator. **If you choose to consult your own vet regarding a foster animal, expenses incurred will be your own; Three Rivers must be informed as soon as possible.** In the event that medical problems develop, foster parents must be prepared to bring the animal to Three Rivers, to pick up medications, and follow any instructions as directed.

FOSTER ANIMAL SUPPLIES

The following is a list of supplies that should be on hand while caring for foster animals in your home. Home At Last Humane Society will provide all mandatory supplies as needed, and as many recommended supplies as possible. A transport carrier will be provided.

Dogs/Puppies

Mandatory Supplies:

- High quality dog/puppy food – keeping both dry and canned on hand is helpful.
- Food and water bowls – ceramic and stainless steel are best.
- Toys – monitor for safety. Puppies will need a variety of appropriate chew toys.

Recommended Supplies:

- Dog/puppy crate – size appropriate – Three Rivers can supply if necessary.

INVESTMENT OF TIME, LOVE, ATTACHMENT

As you spend time caring for foster animals, some attachment is natural and it can be difficult to return them when the foster period is over. It should help to know that nearly 100% of foster animals placed for adoption **are** adopted and our staff work hard to find lifetime matches for all of our animals.

FINDING HOMES – THREE RIVER'S RESPONSIBILITY

We ask that foster volunteers not place foster animals in a new home – the foster animal remains the property of Three Rivers during the length of its foster period. Foster parents are encouraged to refer potential adopters to Three Rivers to complete an adoption application. We cannot guarantee anyone you refer will be able to adopt a specific foster animal; they must meet our adoption criteria.

RETURNING YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL(S)

When you take your foster animal home, the Foster Coordinator will discuss the estimated length of the foster period with you. The Foster Coordinator will contact you near the end of the estimated foster period to discuss the potential return of your foster animal to the shelter for adoption. You should always feel free to contact the Foster Coordinator with any questions, concerns, or important updates regarding your foster animal's progress. Some animals will need to be adopted from foster care – in these cases, the Foster Coordinator will keep in contact with you regarding potential adopters, adoption events, and ways we can work together to advertise your foster animal for adoption.

Sanitation

Between foster animals it is important to do a thorough cleaning of your foster area and supplies before new foster animals arrive. All bedding should be washed in the washer in the hot water cycle with detergent and ½ cup bleach for a full load. All food/water dishes and toys should be washed using hot water and dish detergent.

FOSTER ANIMAL CARE

MEDICAL CARE

Three Rivers will provide all needed medical care for foster animals during the foster period. Consult the Foster Coordinator with any medical concerns. If medications are sent home they must be given as directed. If signs of illness develop, notify the Foster Coordinator.

Particularly, be watchful for:

- lethargy and weakness
- lack of appetite
- vomiting
- diarrhea – any non-formed, non-tubular shaped stools are “diarrhea”
- congestion
- watery eyes
- hair loss
- sneezing or coughing
- any visible parasites (fleas, worms)

Please contact the foster coordinator with any health concerns regarding your foster animal. If your foster animals become ill, the foster period may be prolonged due to additional time needed for recovery and treatment. If you cannot extend your foster period, other arrangements will be made for your foster animal.

CLEANING

The foster animal living area should be kept clean and free of food and waste. Change bedding/towels daily or as soiled. Confining pups to a crate for short absences or for the night can help as well. Adult dogs should be allowed outside on leash two to three times daily to eliminate.

Training and Socialization

If you are fostering an animal that needs special training and/or socialization, the Foster Coordinator and Dog Trainer will discuss the specific needs and action plan for that animal with you. Three Rivers utilizes positive reinforcement techniques with the animals and does require that volunteers and foster homes do so as well.

We encourage foster homes to teach their foster dogs basic skills to enhance their adoptability but don't require it. We would hope to extinguish any bad habits such as jumping up and pulling on leash. We would highly encourage house training and teaching basic commands such as sit, stay, down, etc. Please let the Foster Coordinator know if you need information on how to train using positive reinforcement. Our dog trainer is available for assistance.

CARING FOR PUPPIES

Confinement

Puppies are messy and rambunctious, and confining them to a single, easily cleaned room works well (this is also a good idea for a mother with her litter). The area should be consistently warm and draft free. A crate can be a good sleeping area during naptime or overnight. It may also be used to keep pups out of trouble during absences.

Feeding

Foster puppies are generally eating solid food when they go to foster care, starting with canned food or water soaked kibble, gradually getting them to accept dry kibble alone by eight weeks of age. Puppies should be fed four times a day tapering to three feedings daily. The amount given at each feeding will vary, based on age and breed of the puppies. Premium diets, both canned and dry are recommended for the animals, as they are more palatable, and highly digestible. Fresh water should be provided at all times.

Feeding – Mothers with Litters

Milk production requires extra nutrition. Feed mother dogs premium puppy food free choice. Be sure each puppy is nursing and gaining weight.

Socializing

Puppies should be handled and played with several times daily. The time they spend in a foster home is intended for them to have positive interaction with children, dogs and cats. Children should be closely supervised when handling puppies. Small children are often unaware of proper holding and handling, even with repeated instruction and as a result may be bitten or scratched or unintentionally injure a puppy.

CARING FOR PUPPIES/DOGS WITH KENNEL COUGH

What is Kennel Cough?

Infectious tracheobronchitis, also called dog cold or flu, (Bordetella) parainfluenza or kennel cough is a contagious viral and bacterial infection. It is generally a mild, self-limiting illness of the trachea and bronchi encountered in all age groups of dogs but especially in those under unusual stress, crowding or close confinement. The virus is spread by cough water vapor, aerosol, and direct contact with infectious dogs. Changes in weather, stress and excessive barking can predispose dogs to infection. The incubation period for kennel cough is 5-10 days; course is 10-20 days with symptoms generally more marked during the first week.

Treatment

Treatment for kennel cough may include antibiotics and/or cough suppressants given 2-3 times per day and typically lasts for two weeks. Be especially watchful for increasing coughing or nasal discharge. If noted please call the Foster Coordinator for additional advice on dosage and possible change of antibiotic. Dogs rarely develop a fever and lethargy with kennel cough; in fact, it can be a problem to keep them quiet. Too much or strenuous activity can bring on coughing episodes, so be sure to limit activity and encourage rest. If poor appetite, listlessness, or fever develops, call the Foster Coordinator.

Safety and Confinement

These dogs and puppies need to be kept indoors, in warm, draft free areas. They may be allowed out for short walks to eliminate only. Remember a dog/puppy with kennel cough is potentially contagious to other dogs he might approach. Do not allow contact with other dogs. A crate may be used for overnight containment and confinement when left alone. Adult dogs should be taken out 2-3 times per day to eliminate. Older (8 weeks and over) puppies will need to be taken out every few hours.

Feeding

Food for adult dogs should be offered twice daily, in the morning and evening. Canned food may be offered if appetite is poor, but if the dog is unwilling to eat at all, call the Foster Coordinator. Fresh water should be provided at all times.

Can my dog get kennel cough from my foster dog?

Prevention of kennel cough includes preventing exposure to infected dogs, limiting stress, and vaccination. Although the usual five-way dog vaccine includes parainfluenza (DHLPP) it does not provide very good immunity to kennel cough. The best protection (though not perfect) is provided by the intranasal products which include Bordetella and parainfluenza in nose-drop form. Immunity is usually established 3-4 days after vaccination. If a foster dog will be introduced into a home with a resident dog, the resident dog should receive an intranasal vaccine. Prevent contact for 3-5 days.

Thank you for becoming part of our team as a Foster Parent. You bring invaluable assistance to our shelter and to the animals in your care. We hope your foster experience is enjoyable and rewarding. You make the difference for homeless pets!